DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 208 324 CG 015 497

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TITLE Sex-Typed Behaviors and Developmental Psychology: A Feminist Perspective.
PUB DATE Mar 81
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Association for Women in Psychology (8th, Boston, MA, March 5-8, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Development; Behavior Patterns; *Developmental Psychology; *Feminism; *Intervention; Models; Nature Nurture Controversy; Sex Differences; Sex Fairness; *Sex Role; *Sex Stereotypes; Workshops

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a model workshop focused on sex-typed behavior and developmental psychology, which is designed to examine the major theories based on biology, socialization or a complex developmental process. The materials concentrate on the three main theoretical approaches underlying the development of sex-role behaviors, i.e., psychoanalytical theory, behavioral/social learning theory, and cognitive-developmental theories. The "fit" of these theories into feminist perspectives and the goal of promoting an equal and equitable society are discussed. Elements of developmental models are described and a feminist developmental theory is proposed. Topics for group discussion are suggested to design interventions based on developmental theory as to why males and females have certain behaviors and attitudes. (JAC)

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SEX-TYPED BEHAVIORS AND DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

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Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for Women in Psychology, Boston, MA, March 5-8, 1981.

1981 AWP NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Linda P. Thurston

Type Of Program: Introductory Workshop

Title: Sex-typed Behaviors and Developmental Psychology
A Feminist Perspective

Content Area: Developmental Psychology

I. Why do we need to consider developmental theory, as feminists?

In our society women are generally characterized as being dependent, nurturant, and passive. Men are most often considered active, aggressive, and powerful. Are these characteristics inherent in each sex, or do males and females learn from the society in which the live, the acceptable and expectable behaviors for their sex? There is considerable controversy over whether (or the degree to which) observed differences in sex-typed behaviors are learned or are inherent. Few major developmental theories agree in the basic psychological aspects of masculinity and femininty which cut across all cultures (Mead, 1969). In addition, few schools of thought agree on the extenet to which sex-typed behaviors are due to some sort of developmental or learning process.

We, as feminists and as psychologists, are committed to our own non-sexist belief about females, female behavior, and female development. Because of this special concern, we need to know what the current accepted theories of development say about females, female behavior, and female development.

What are they saying? Most current research and therapy practices are based on one of the four major theories of development, and we need to consider the bases of the research and therapy practices we are using. We need to look at the basic developmental theories that may be basically incompatible with our feminist assumptions and beliefs.

II. Goals of the Workshop:

The workshop will examine the four major schools of thought in developmental psychology in terms of what they say about sex-typed behaviors, to what extent they are based on biology, socialization, or some complex developmental process. We will look at the empirical basis of the theories and see if the data base is good solid evidence, or merely patriarchal bias. We will look at the theories ans see how they do or do not relate to feminist theory. Each of you will come to your own conclusion about current developmental theories and the effect of those theories on your own work and interest in psychology. We will consider these questions: What does developmental psychology say about female behavior? How can we as researchers, teachers, and practitioners contribute to a valid developmental theory which is based on acceptable evidence? An how can we translate developmental theory into non-sexist psychological practice?

III. How do developmental theories fit into our perspective and into our goal of promoting and equitable society for women and men?

Psychologists, like other scientists, tend to pride themselves on the objectivity of their investigations and on attempts to build value-free theoretical models, driven by empirical data rather than personal beliefs and prejudices. However, research - the empirical data - is intimately connected to social and political theories of the day. Much of the research regarding sex differences had been guided by conventions of the time (Spence & Helmreich, 1978).

The women's movement of the 1960's challenged the political and social institutions of the day. The growing number of psychologists reappraised the accepted premises about masculinity - femininity. The current social, political, economic and psychological assumptions suggestions a bi-polar nature of sexes. For example, major psychometric instruments devised

measuring masculinity - femininity had been set up in a single scale. Cultural examples are the home-work sex-related dichotomy and sex-related occupation segregation. What account for observed differences and personalities and behaviors? Such things as sex-specific child-rearing practices, and nature and severity of sex-role differentiation imposed by society, in turn, can be shown to be related to political, sociological, and exonomical forces. For example Barry, Bacon and Child (1957) found that magnitude of sex differences in socialization practices were related to society's demand for superior strength. Another study (Haavio - Mannila, 1975) suggests that magnitude of sex-role differentiation as related to participation in the labor force, is related to rate of industrialization.

In this country, both evoluntionary and revoluntionary changes in sex differentiation have occured in the last one hundred fifty years. Some examples of changes which have affected sex-roles: the industrial revolution, rise of the middle class, wars, unemployment, automation, bureaucracy (require "people" skills rather than strength). These same social and economic changes affect our field.

The things that concern us are: what is the origin of sex-role differences; what factors maintain sex-role differences; and exactly what are patterns in observed behavior. Psychology approaches the answers to these questions from several different perspectives. At one end of the theoretical continuum is the belief in near-universal regularities which are genetically determined, toward the other end are the schools that believe there are some innate sex-related characteristics, but some special process must be formulated to account for differences in behavior, attitudes, attributes, etc...

Developmental theorists have tended to accept as a given complex set of gender-related phenomena that exist in our society and to focus their attention on the processes by which its members come to correspond their behaviors and attributs to the typical male or female in their culture - the development of "appropriate" patters of behavior.

IV. Elements of developmental models:

If we want to know how they account for the behavioral differences between the sexes, we need to know something about the developmental theories. (Handout #1)

A. Definitions of masculinity/femininity: role behaviors, attributes, characterisitics, attitudes. (What are the dependent variables and how are they measured?)

B. Theory of development, "cases" of behavior, attitudes, etc. are sex differences learned or unlearned, how do they explain the underlying processes which account for the emergence of sex-typed behavior patterns during the preschool and elementary school aged children? (What are the dependent variables?)

C. Empirical basis for theory may be based on cultural values, pre-conceived notions of gender stereotype, or stages, rather the on empirical evidence.

D. Nature of "intervention": If we are concerned with therapy, teaching, training, changes in the status qio, what do theories say about what intervention is and when is should take place?

V. Make up a "feminist" developmental theory:

Feminists, in general, believe that women's sex-role behavior is a product of their socialization and their environment. On this basis we believe in the equality of the sexes and in androgynous behaviors. We believe as well in the efficacy of changing variables within society to promote equality of the sexes, that changing one women at a time will not give up the non-sexist society we espouse. Our approaches to intervention run the gamut of working for a constitutional amendment to assure equal rights to running support groups to give support to women as they encounter the inequities in society.

Right now, we're going to get into smaller groups and do some brainstorming about these questions. We're going to invent a feminist developmental theory that will account for our feminist perspective. (Handout #2)

VI. Look at each of 4 major developmental theories (Handout #3)

The four main schools of developmental psychology will be compared relative to their ideas about the extent to which sex roles are learned. The reliance (or non-reliance) of their theories on empirical evidence and the discrepanices in specificity of definitions of sex-role behaviors will be discussed. Piaget's cognitive/intellectual theory (Kohlberg also) and Gesells' maturational theory will be included. Freud and Erickson will represent the psychoanalytic shcool; Skinner, Sears, Bandura and others will represent the social learning and behavioral theorists.

In discussing sex-role behavior, various theorists use the terms "gender identity," "sex-typed behavior," "sex-role behavior," and masculinity and femininity. Often these terms are used interchangably, and too often, their meanings are undefined. Most of the schools of thought discussed here refer to sex-typed behavior as those which relate little or not at all to male and female biological processes (childbirth, hormonal changes), but rather to overt social behavior that is seen in the societal context as characteristic of males and females (for example, aggressive, assertive, and passive behaviors). Because these specific sex-typed behaviors are not more clearly defined, comparisions of theories about learning and sex-typed behaviors is difficult. We have to make some assumptions to be sure we're comparing the same thing.

Gesell - Maturational Theory

Arnold Gesell and his associates at the Yale Clinic made extensive observations of children and established age-linked norms of development for

male and female children (Gesell, 1946). They were interested in normative-maturational development and wanted to discover "natural laws of growth." Their developmental information included norms on sex-role development, which they define as sex differences in temperament, interests, hobbies, and types of preferred activities and reading materials, etc. Gesell's studies indicate sex differences in "temperamental disposition, in psychomotor demeanor, and in developmental timing" which he concludes are "intrinsic in nature" (Gesell, 1946). Although he notes these differences are due to cultural bias, "the bias itself must have been originally produced by innate differences in the sexes" (Gesell and Gesell, 1912). In any event, "the end result is that each sex tends to play the role assigned to it" (Gesell, 1946).

Ilg and Ames, associates of Gesell, speak of "natural tendencies," "inclinations," and "natural potentials" (Ilg and Ames, 1965). They mention very little about learning, but they state that understanding individuality is approached from measuring the way the body is built or from an observation of behavior. They come to "the conclusion that individuality is largely inborn: (Ilg and Ames, 1955). Their conclusion that now environment can change a child to any major extent would also tend to indicate what little influence the Gesellian theorists place in the relevance of learning. Because they understand behavior in the sense that "behavior is a function of structure." they conclude that "the human organism will act as it does largely because of the way it is built: (Ilg and Ames, 1955).

Cognitive Developmental - (Pause to write in worksheet)

Piaget recognized no essential sex difference in his study of intellectual development (Flavell, 1963; Maier, 1969). All attributes of personality, including sex role behavior, depend primarily upon the evolving intellectual

capacity to organize experience. Sex-role concepts are formed according to the same epistemological laws as all other concepts. Piaget sees himself as a researcher of human development and his field of investigation is the evolution of cognitive organization, which he understands as being neither purely social nor maturational. His method of research is the detailed investigation of the small sample of the species. Empirical evidence, he asserts, is a tool to substantiate or refute facts established by logic (Maier, 1969). Therefore, Piaget's methods avoid rigorous quantative data and precise definitions of behavior.

Using his investigantions of child behavior and his system of logic, Piaget has established an evolving organization of logic, a cognitive structure basic to the establishment of all concepts. Piaget understands learning as a function of development; it cannot explain development but stages of development can in part explain learning. This is "in experiencing his own native reflexes, the individual is led to use them and to apply them, resulting in the acquisition of new behavioral processes" (Piaget, 1965). When at birth, the child is labeled, "boy" or "girl," the child actively selects sex-typed experiences which are consistent with the child's own gender label (Piaget, 1965; Piaget, 1968). Dora Lillian and Carol Gilligan, at Harvard, have done some very recent work looking at Kohlberg's work, especially from a feminist perspecitve.

Freud - Psychoanalytical Theory

Psychoanalysis explains psychosexual development by examining interior, subjective processes of individual sex differentiation. In explaining sex-role behavior, the field attempts to formulate general laws of the interaction between gender anatomy and individual psychosexual development. "Biology is destiny." In 1905, Freud anchored sex differnces to the formation of

the Oedipus complex, with male and female development analogous (Freud, 1961). First two steps of development are the same: oral & anal. But, when the child is about four, girls discover they lack a penis and the development paths diverge. Thus, he attributed behavioral differences between the sexes to the discovery in the "phallic phase," by girls that they lack a penis, and the resultant "penis envy" begins the process of feminization.

Because of this, male ego-strength is much stronger than female ego-strength (Freud, 1925). The process, therefore, is the psychial consequences of the anatomical differences between the sexes that produce gender differences in ego-strength, and thus in behavior. Freud's term for this unique process is "identification." It is the means by which each child acquires the behaviors which society requires of him or her as adult. It explains origin of what he assumes to be permanent, global personality differences between males and females. Identification is biology based. Freud based his theory on "a handful of cases," and felt his opinions were justified by the findings of Horney (1926), Helene Deutsch (1944) and others (Lee and Stewart, 1976).

Erikson, a psychoanalytic theoritst who emphasizes the development of the individual within a society framework, understands maleness and femaleness as "ego behavior and supereto values." Like Freud, Erikson stresses "libinal sexual drives" and "biosuxual position" in accounting for differences in "behavioral and psychological characteristics" of the sexes. He suggests developmental processes vary according to sex and "psychosocial sex roles" are developed as matruation interacts with a process of education within the child's culture (Erikson, 1963). Because the child sees him/her self as a boy or girl, the child "learns and associates and experiences as a boy or as a gire" and continually questions his/her behavior to check if it is in line with what society expects.

Behavioral Social Learning

Social learning theorists tend to focus on overt aspects of behavior. Their general inferences are drawn from studies about the impact of environmental forces upon development are drawn from empirical studies. The theoretical emphasis is on the learning experiences of a child which result from stimulus-response (S-R) sequences in the child's upbringing. Development is a function of learning or is part of the learning process. Behavioral differences are due to the reinforcing events in the child's environment, to modeling and imitation of adults or other children (Sears, 1965; Maier, 1969; Bijou and Baer, 1975).

The theory recognizes sex differences to the extent that these differences affect the child's environment and the environment affects the child. The child's sex provides an important stimulus to the mother and places the child in "a social category that has enormous implication for training" (Sears, Mccoby, and Levin, 1957). Early in life each sex experiences different child-rearing practices and consequently develops differently (Sears, Pau, and Alpert, 1965). Sex-role behavior is thus learned and the process is called identification (Sears, et al).

Identification has its roots in early experiences of "spontaneous imitation of behavior" of the same-sex parent and receiving recognition and "personal satisfaction" (or reinforcement) from it (Mischel, 1966). As identification with the same-sex parent increases, the child behaves increasingly in the manner society prescribes for adults of the same sex. Employing standard research techniques and properly controlled variables, Sears demands theory be data-based.

Bandura and Walters (1963) have rigorously studied sex-role development from a social learning approach. Bandura and Walters studied imitation/identification with many models and analyzed the characteristics of the

models in terms of reinforcing power, etc. They have concluded that children will behave as they are expected and reinforced to behave. In addition, they assert the learning takes place through the principles of modeling, imitation, observational learning and vacarious reinforcement (Bandura and Walters, 1963).

Like the social learning theorists, Skinnerian behaviorists base their account of development on empirical evidence rather than on inferred states or preconceived developmental stages. These behaviorists study the relationships between specific circumstances and specific behavioral changes (Skinner, 1953; Bijou and Baer, 1975; Fagot and Patterson, 1969). They emphasize overt and measurable behavior and the independent variables of the scrutiny are in the immediate environment or environmental history. The sex of the child is one variable in the way the evnironment reacts to the child. According to Skinner (1953) behavior depends on the practices of the group of which the organism is a member. A child learns to conform to standards of a given community when certain responses are reinforced, ignored, or punished. All behavior is thus explained by social and non-social contingencies.

When considering intervention, we can look at Walden Two (Skinner, 1976). Skinner describes a society in which children are reared from infancy by practices which treat the sexes equally. Environmental contingencies are not based on the sex of the child. Parents of both sexes are nurturant and may have an equal part in childrearing. When women have the economic independence and cultural freedom of men, Skinner predicts, traditional sex-typed behavior will be eradicated (pp. 144-149).

VII. Discussion of personal theories and practices, comparison of "our" theory with other "accepted ones."

VIII. What do we do next? If we want to change things, where do we begin? Where do the theories and our theory say to begin? Is that's where we're working? Discussion.

IX. Get into groups and design an intervention based on one of the five developmental theories about why males and females are the way they are. Look at developmental model and lok at political and social aspects. (Handout #4).

X. Summary and Wrap-up

There are three main theoretical approaches which attempt to explain the process undc.lying the development of sex-role behaviors: psychoanalytical theory, behavioral and social learning theory, and cognitive-developmental theories.

By pre-school and early elementary school years, sex-role learning in evident. Our feminist approach to sex-differentiated behavior is concerned mainly with mental health and social equality for women and men.

The discrepancies in theories and definitions related to sex-role behavior and the extent to which it is learned seem to indicate the necessity of relying on empirical evidence as a basis for theorizing about the development of sex-typed behavior. But the extent to which the various theories rely on empirical evidence varies greatly. Recent research on gender identity is controversial (Evans, 1972; Zuger, 1970; Hartley, 1964; Lee and Stewart, 1976). Barlow, Reynolds, and Agras (1973) have successfully changed sex-typed behavior of an adult and Rekers and Lovaas (1974) have done so with a child. Others have pointed to a biological basis for differences in behavior (Money, 1965). Clearly, more research is needed to determine the controlling variables in the development of male and female behavior. As feminists, we have our own biases but we need to examine what developmental psychologists have to say about this important and controversial issue.

Then, we need to consider the extent to which thost widely accepted theories (by many feminists) are based on empirical evidence. We need to consider cultural or partiarchal biases within the definition of variables, research designs and measures. The discrepancies in theories related to sex-role behavior and the extent to which it is learned seem to indicate the necessity of relying on empirical evidence as a basis for theorizing about the development of sex-typed behavior. But the extent to which the various theories are valid and which are compatible with our feminism? And how can we as researchers and practitioners contribute to a valid developmental theory which is based on acceptabel evidence? And how can we as researchers and practitioners translate developmental theory into non-sexist psychological practice? We have only begun to touch on these issues today. The answers will take time to discover and maybe each of us will have a part in discovering them.

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SALIENT FEATURES OF DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

1. What are the dependent variables and how are they measured? (Definitions of masculinity/femininity; role behaviors; attitudes; characteristics; attributes.)

2. What is the "cause" of behavior, attitudes, etc.? (What are the independent variables?) (What is the theory of development?)

3. What is the empirical basis for the theory of "cause"?

4. Is "intervention" possible; what is the nature of intervention?

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A FEMINIST DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY WORKSHEET

(1) DEFINITIONS	
(2) "CAUSE"	
(3) DATA BASE	
(4) INTERVENTION	

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	Gesell	Cognitive Developmental	Psychoanalytical	Social Learning
A. ROLE BEHAVIORS (Masculinity versus Femininity)				
B. CAUSE OF BEHAVIOR (Theory of Development)				
C. CAUSE OF SEX-TYPED BEHAVIOR (Learned, unlearned)				
D. EMPIRICAL BASIS FOR THEORY				
E. NATURE OF INTERVENTION				

DEVELOPING INTERVENTIONS FOR EQUALITY

1. Purpose:

2. Dependent Variables and Measurement:

3. Intervention (Independent Variables):

4. Theory and Research Design:

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